Environmental Bulletin
from the Savannah River Site
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SRL Seepage Basin remedial action to begin

The Department of Energy (DOE), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) have selected remedial approaches for Savannah River Site's (SRS) Savannah River Laboratory (SRL) Seepage Basins operable unit. A 45-day public comment period for the Statement of Basis/Proposed Plan and the associated draft RCRA permit modification was held from January 29, 1999 to March 14, 1999. The remedial decision is documented in the Record of Decision (ROD) document. This document includes a responsiveness summary, which addresses public comments. DOE has worked with SCDHEC and EPA to ensure the remedial approach is consistent with all applicable environmental requirements. The ROD is available for review from April 26, 2000 to May 25, 2000.

DOE, EPA, and SCDHEC have determined that remedial action is necessary for this unit. The remedial action is intended to be permanent and effective in both the long and near terms. The preferred remedial action is:

(1) Excavate one foot of contaminated soil from the sides and bottom of basins 1 and 3;
(2) Excavate four feet of contaminated soil from the bottom and one foot from the sides of basin 2;
(3) Remove the process sewer line (including one foot of soil below the sewer line) from the basin to the first manhole, (approximately 375 feet);
(4) Dispose of the process sewer pipe and contaminated soils at a licensed offsite disposal facility; and
(5) Place an earthen cover over the four basins.

Information Repositories

Copies of the Record of Decision are available in the Administrative Record. The Administrative Record is available in the following information repositories:

- DOE Public Reading Room, Gregg-Graniteville Library, University of South Carolina-Aiken campus, Aiken, SC;
- Thomas Cooper Library Government Documents Department, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC.

Hard copies of the ROD are also available at the following locations:

- Reese Library, Augusta State University, Augusta, GA;
- Asa H. Gordon Library, Savannah State University, Savannah, GA.

The Record of Decision is also available on the Internet in the SRS Home Page (http://www.srs.gov), under "Happening Now," (http://www.srs.gov/general/srs-home.htm) and on the SRS Environmental Restoration Home Page, under "Public Involvement" (http://www.srs.gov/general/srenviro/erd/pub/

DOE to evaluate alternate storage approach for DWPF canisters

DOE has prepared a draft environmental assessment (EA) (DOE/EA-1327) to analyze the potential consequences associated with an alternative approach for the Defense Waste Processing Facility (DWPF) glass waste canister storage facility at SRS. DOE is evaluating this alternative approach to the interim storage of DWPF glass waste canisters prior to shipment to a geologic repository.

The alternative under evaluation involves building and operating an onsite aboveground concrete storage pad for casks containing the DWPF canisters. The storage casks would be fabricated by a vendor using the SRS's inventory of depleted uranium trioxide powder as part of the manufacturing process. These casks would be the property of the vendor and would be removed from SRS by that vendor when onsite DWPF canister storage is no longer required. Any further pursuit of the aboveground storage cask approach will depend on the outcome of this EA process and further SRS evaluations (cost, schedule and technical) against the storage approach currently in use for the DWPF canisters.

The public comment period for this draft EA will be open until May 2, 2000. Any comments received after that date will be considered to the extent practicable. Comments and requests for copies of the draft EA should be sent to:

Andrew R. Grainger, NEPA Compliance Officer
U. S. Department of Energy
Savannah River Operations Office
Building 742-A, Room 185, Aiken, SC 29808
e-mail: nepa@srs.gov telephone: 1-800-881-7292

Meeting held in Aiken

SRS CAB makes six recommendations in March

No. 116 DNFSB Recommendaton 2000-1

The SRS Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) views the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (DNFSB) recommendation as a positive step to lead to increased focus on the timely completion of the 94-1 stabilization program and requested that DOE brief the CAB on its implementation plan by May 23, 2000. The CAB also requested a presentation by the DNFSB by July 25, 2000 regarding the acceptance or rejection of DOE's implementation plan.

No. 117 Alternatives for On-Site Disposal of CERCLA Waste

The SRS CAB requested that before March 28, 2000, DOE identify and provide a list of any waste units for which physical removal of radiological low level waste could reasonably be expected as part of a disposal remedy, as well as disposal alternatives for the waste identified. The CAB also recommended that DOE, EPA and SCDHEC involve the Board and public earlier in the decisionmaking processes for these waste units.

No. 118 Waste Management Equity Issues

The SRS CAB recommended that DOE and SCDHEC develop and present a plan and schedule to describe the resolution of eight equity issues regarding various waste programs at SRS and requested annual updates on unresolved equity issues each November.

No. 119 Compacted Versus Non-Compacted Waste Disposal in E Area

The SRS CAB supports the need to evaluate waste compaction in the E Area trenches and recommended that DOE investigate the need to compact waste streams and the cost that could be avoided by not compacting waste prior to disposal. The CAB also requested a comparison of long range performance of the trenches with and without waste compaction and the potential impacts on closure of new trenches.

No. 120 FY 2001 Budget Deferment of Infrastructure Activities

Concerned about the continual deferral of needed infrastructure improvements in the SRS budget for several years, the SRS CAB recommended that DOE-Headquarters reinstate the $5.3 million in the FY2001 budget for two infrastructure restoration projects and establish a 10-year, $380 million stable long-term budget strategy for infrastructure improvements at SRS.

No. 121 FY 2001 Budget Deferment of Pu 2013 Stabilization Capability

The SRS CAB also recommended that DOE-Headquarters reinstate $30.8 million in the FY2001 budget for the Pu 3013 Stabilization Capability project and fully fund the total projected costs to construct and operate the Plutonium Stabilization and Packaging System.

Public may review draft EA for HEU blend-down project

DOE has prepared a draft environmental assessment (EA) (DOE/EA-1322) to analyze the potential environmental impacts of the proposed highly enriched uranium (HEU) blend-down project at SRS. The scope of the proposed action would include construction and operation of a low enriched uranium (LEU) loading station and modifications to the existing HEU blend-down facilities, SRS Central Analytical Laboratory (CLAB), and K-Area facilities.

DOE needs to take action to support the ongoing disposition of surplus HEU, a weapons-usable fissile material, within the DOE complex. Blending HEU down to LEU with materials low in Uranium-235 eliminates the risk of diversion for nuclear proliferation purposes and enhances the beneficial recovery of the commercial fuel value of the resulting LEU. This isotopic blending process can be performed by blending HEU with natural uranium. Once HEU is blended down to LEU, it is no more weapons-usable than existing, abundant supplies of LEU.

DOE proposes to construct and operate the LEU loading station and implement the changes to the existing HEU blend-down facilities, CLAB, and K-Area facilities necessary to support the operation of the proposed station. This action would enable SRS to ship the blended-down LEU offsite for further processing, thereby eliminating the onsite inventory and the weapons-usability of this material. The conversion and transportation of the LEU solution were already addressed in broad terms in the final environmental impact statement (EIS) on the disposition of surplus HEU (DOE/EIS-0240).

The public comment period for this draft EA will be open until May 24, 2000. Any comments received after that date will be considered to the extent practicable. Comments and requests for copies of the draft EA should be sent to Andrew R. Grainger, NEPA Compliance Officer, U. S. Department of Energy, Savannah River Operations Office Bldg. 742-A, Room 185, Aiken, SC 29808 e-mail: nepa@srs.gov; telephone: 1-800-881-7292

Current NEPA actions affecting SRS

• Construction and Operation of the Highly Enriched Uranium Blend-Down Facilities at the Savannah River Site (DOE/EA-1322), The EA will analyze the potential environmental consequences associated with construction and operation of a low enriched uranium (LEU) loading station and modifications to existing facilities at SRS. The proposed action would support delivery of LEU (converted from off-specification highly enriched uranium) to the Tennessee Valley Authority. The draft EA is available now for public comment (see article on page 2.)

• Offsite Transportation of Certain Low-Level and Mixed Radioactive Waste from SRS for Treatment and Disposal at Commercial Facilities (DOE/EA-1308), The EA will analyze the potential environmental consequences associated with shipping low-level and mixed low-level waste to treatment facilities in Texas and Tennessee and/or Environcare of Utah for disposal. This draft EA is expected the second quarter, 2000.

• Revised FONSI for the Natural Resource Management Activities at SRS EA (DOE/EA-0826), In 1993, DOE prepared an EA and issued a FONSI for the continued management of natural resources at SRS. In a revision to the SRS Natural Resources Plan, DOE was to continue protection and recovery activities for federally listed, threatened and endangered animals.." The red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW) was one of the endangered species. The impacts in the revised plan are no greater than described in the 1993 EA, therefore an EIS is not required and a revised FONSI is sufficient. The revised FONSI is expected in May, 2000.

• Evaluate an Alternate Approach for the Defense Waste Processing Facility (DWPF) Glass Waste Canister Storage Facility at SRS (DOE/EA-1327), The EA will analyze potential environmental consequences associated with building and operating an onsite above-ground concrete pad for casks containing DWPF canisters. The storage casks would be made using SRS's inventory of depleted uranium trioxide powder. The draft EA is available now for public comment (see article on page 1).

• SRS High Level Waste Tank Closure (DOE/EIS-0303), The proposed action is to close the SRS HLW Tanks in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, DOE Orders and SCDHEC permit requirements. The draft EIS is expected the second quarter, 2000.

• SRS Spent Nuclear Fuel Management (DOE/EIS-0279), This EIS evaluates management strategies using existing, modified and new facilities or processes for spent nuclear fuel assigned to SRS. The final EIS was released on April 14 with melt and dilute listed as the preferred alternative. The ROD is expected in May 2000.

• DOE Waste Management (DOE/EIS-0200), This EIS recommends the types of wastes DOE sites would ship to other DOE sites for storage, treatment, and disposal. Transuranic, hazardous, and high level RODS have been issued. Low level and low-level mixed waste RODS were signed on February 18, 2000. For the LLW and LLMW RODs, DOE will perform minimum treatment at all sites and continue, to the extent practicable, disposal of onsite LLW at the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory (INEEL), the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) in New Mexico, the Oak Ridge Reservation (ORR) in Tennessee, and here at the Savannah River Site (SRS). In addition, the Department has decided to make the Hanford Site in Washington and the Nevada Test Site (NTS) available to all DOE sites for LLW disposal. INEEL and SRS also will continue to dispose of LLW generated by the Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program. For the management of mixed low-level waste (MLLW) analyzed in the WM PEIS, the Department has decided to treat MLLW at the Hanford Site, INEEL, ORR and SRS, and to dispose of MLLW at the Hanford Site and NTS. The Department also has decided to amend its 1996 ROD for the NTS Environmental Impact Statement, to implement the Expanded Use Alternative for waste management activities at NTS.

• SRS Salt Disposition Alternative SEIS (DOE/EIS-0082-S2), The proposed action is to construct and operate a process to replace In-Tank Precipation as part of the SRS High Level Waste Management System. This SEIS is being restarted. A new schedule is under development.

National Paths to Closure document available

The National Paths to Closure for March 2000 has recently been released by the Department of Energy. You may see an electronic copy of this document by logging on to the following DOE-HQ web site:

www.em.doe.gov/closure/

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For more information on this or other environmental and compliance activities at SRS, please contact:

Jim Moore	**Donna K. Martin**
WSRC	**WSRC**
Aiken, S.C. 29808	**Public Involvement**
(800) 249-8155	**(803) 725-7169**

e-mail: jim02.moore@srs.gov

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http://www.SRS.GOV/general/srenviro/envbul/ebinex.htm

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